DARK HORSE
MAVERICK
8 of 9
frank MILLER
HELL and BACK
A SIN CITY love story
PLEASE. HAVE MERCY.
THIS IS MERCY.

mike **RICHARDSON** *publisher*

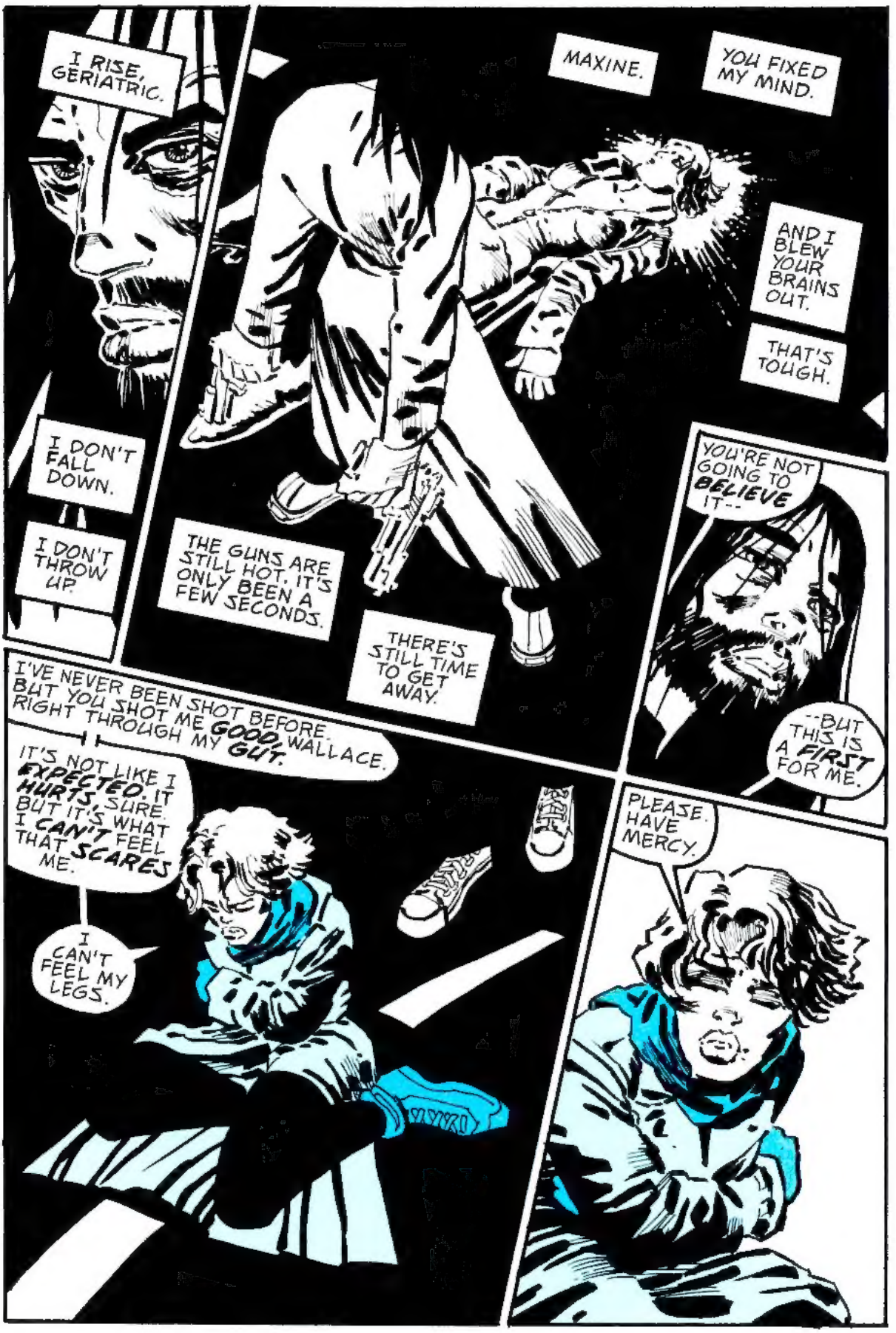
cary **GRAZZINI** *designer*

diana **SCHUTZ** *editor*

lynn **VARLEY** *cover colors*

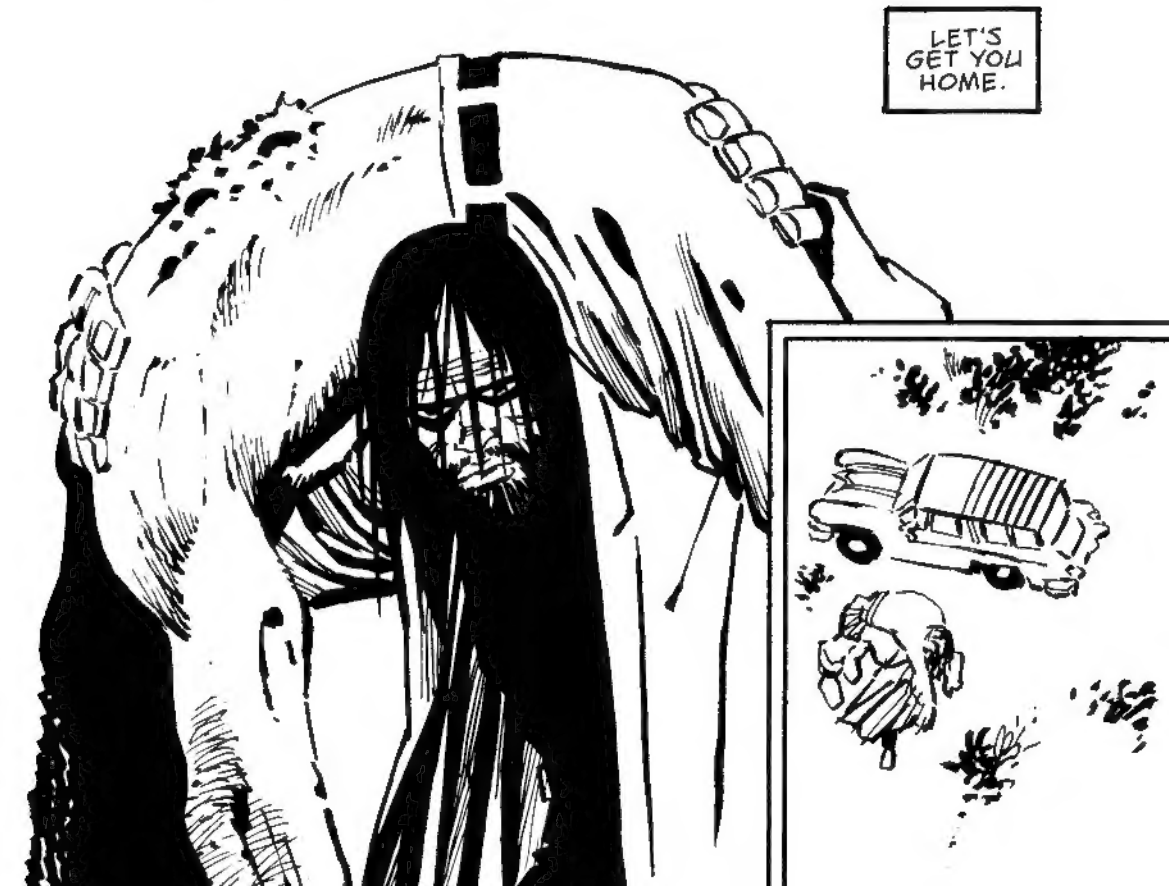
frank **MILLER** *story & art*

NGG
I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO LOOK.
KEFF
MAXINE. YOU KEPT YOUR WORD, AFTER ALL.
YOU FIXED MY MIND.
THANKS.


I RISE, GERIATRIC.
I DON'T FALL DOWN.
I DON'T THROW UP.
MAXINE.
YOU FIXED MY MIND.
AND I BLEW YOUR BRAINS OUT.
THAT'S TOUGH.
THE GUNS ARE STILL HOT. IT'S ONLY BEEN A FEW SECONDS.
THERE'S STILL TIME TO GET AWAY.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE IT--
--BUT THIS IS A FIRST FOR ME.
I'VE NEVER BEEN SHOT BEFORE, WALLACE. BUT YOU SHOT ME GOOD. RIGHT THROUGH MY GUT.
IT'S NOT LIKE I EXPECTED. IT HURTS, SURE. BUT IT'S WHAT I CAN'T FEEL THAT SCARES ME.
I CAN'T FEEL MY LEGS.
PLEASE. HAVE MERCY.

I DO.
BLAM
SHE NEVER KNOWS WHAT HITS HER.
PROMISES MADE. PROMISES KEPT.
DELIA.
YOU STRANGE, SAD CREATURE.
GOODBYE.

CAPTAIN. YOU LIED TO ME.
YOU TOLD ME YOU'D MAKE IT.
YOU'RE DEAD AS HELL.


LET'S GET YOU HOME.

WE BEAR WITNESS.

JERRY BIDS SILENT FAREWELL TO THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE.

STILL NOT A WORD.

JERRY-- NOTHING I COULD SAY WOULD COVER IT...

TELL ME THERE WAS A GOOD ENOUGH REASON, COMMANDER. TELL ME IT WAS WORTH IT.

I BELIEVE IT WAS.

THEN I'M WITH YOU, SIR. WHATEVER I CAN DO.

I KNOW. BUT I--

HUKK

STEADY, MAN. IT'S THE *DRUGS*.

HUKK HUKK

WHEN HE SEES THE CORPSE, JERRY DOESN'T SAY A WORD.

HE JUST GRABS AN AX AND STARTS CHOPPING WOOD.

SOON, THE CAPTAIN BURNS.

FLASH

STEADY. YOU'LL BE OKAY. I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.

ESTHER. I'M *USELESS*.

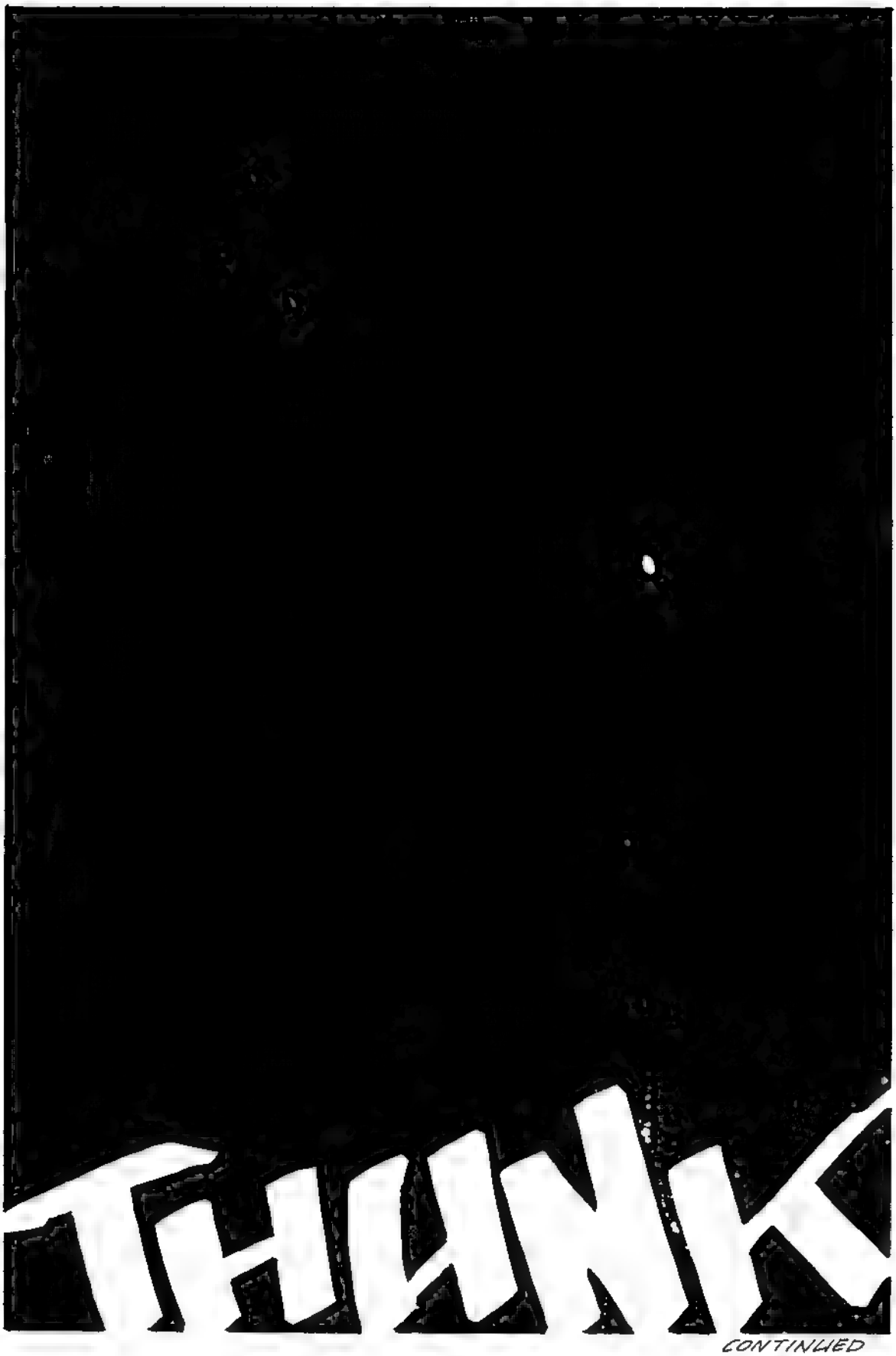
I'M *USELESS*.

ESTHER.
HOLD ON.
WHEREVER YOU ARE--WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING TO YOU--HOLD ON.
I'LL GET THROUGH THIS. I WILL.
HOLD ON.
HOLD ON.

UP AND AT 'EM, DOCTOR FREDRIC. RISE AND SHINE.
YOU'VE SLEPT PAST NOON. THAT'S NEVER A GOOD SIGN.
IT'S THOSE BAD HABITS OF YOURS. YOU'RE WASTING YOUR LIFE AWAY.
MUH--MARIAH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

COME TO THINK OF IT, I DIDN'T ASK. WHAT AM I DOING HERE, COLONEL?
PLEASE DON'T THINK YOU'RE BEING PUNISHED, DOCTOR YOUR BREACH OF PROCEDURE WAS FORGIVEN.
THIS IS STRICTLY BUSINESS RISK MANAGEMENT.
ORRIN! MY GOD...
I THINK I'M GONNA BE SICK...
BLARF
LISTEN TO HIM BAD HABITS. NO DISCIPLINE.
PRECISELY MY POINT THIS MAN WALLACE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF FORMIDABLE. AND HE KNOWS YOUR FACE. HE MIGHT FIND YOU
GIVEN YOUR PROCLIVITIES, WE ARE LESS THAN CONFIDENT IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION.
I'D NEVER SELL YOU OUT! NEVER!

A JUNKIE'S PROMISE UTTERLY SINCERE. UTTERLY WORTHLESS
PICK UP THE PACE, MARIAH. THIS ISN'T OUR LAST STOP.
YES, SIR!
SNAP
MUH-- MUH-- MY GLASSES --I CAN BARELY SEE WITHOUT MUH MUH--
KRUNCH
OH...
BAD HABITS, DOCTOR FREDRIC
..YOU'LL SEE WELL ENOUGH
THEY'LL BE THE DEATH OF YOU.
NO. NO! NOT THE EYE!
NOT THE EYE!!

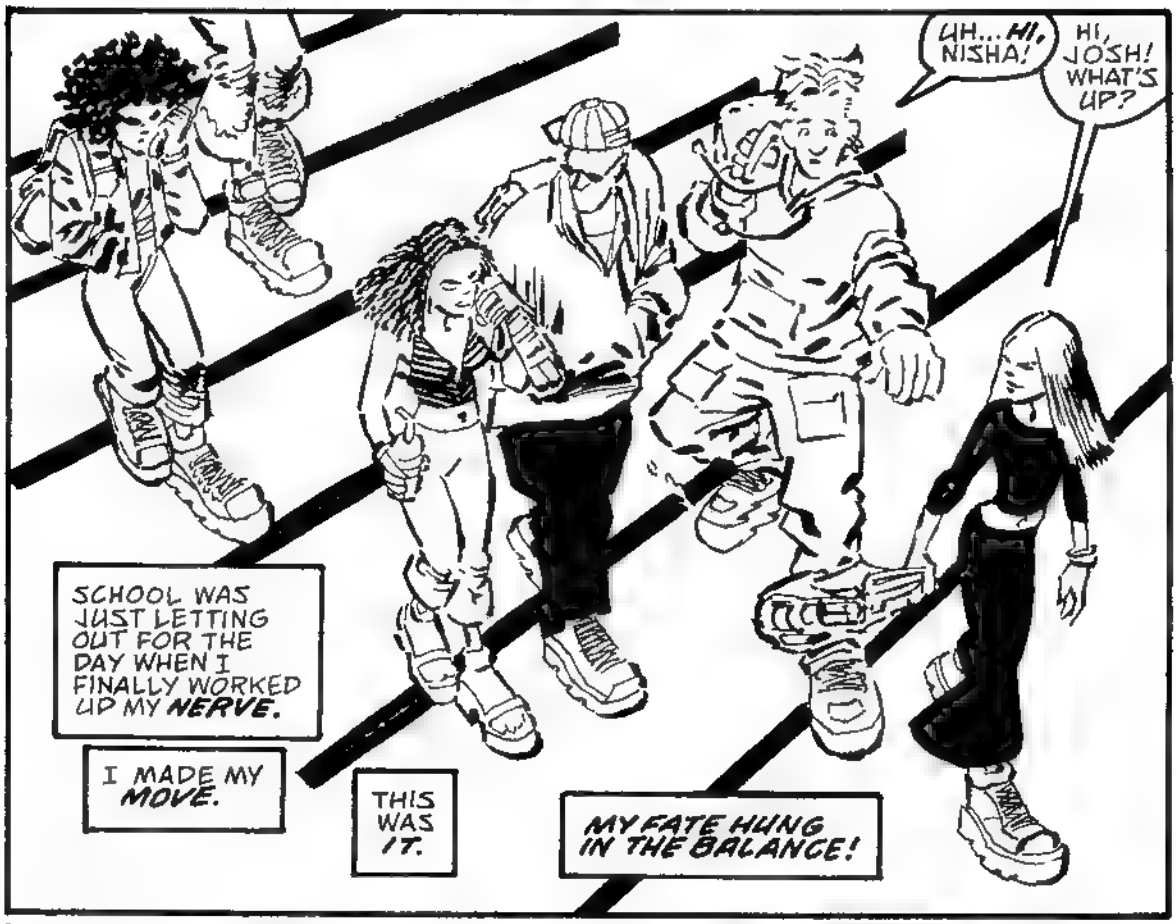


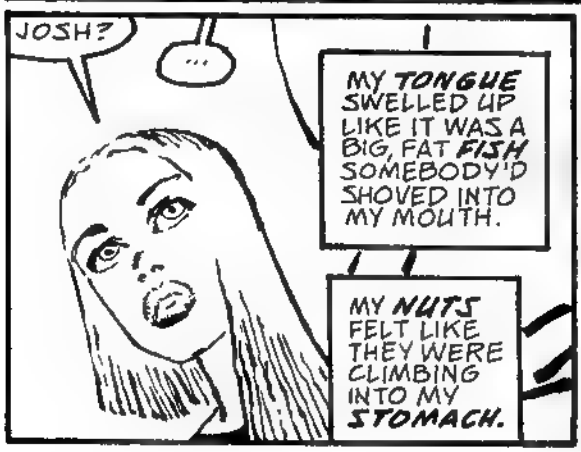
CONTINUED

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO YOU, DAD. ABOUT ANYTHING. AND I GOTTA TELL SOMEBODY WHAT HAPPENED. MOM WOULD KILL ME IF SHE FOUND OUT. AND THE GUYS--I'D NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT. I AM SUCH AN ASSHOLE! SO, ANYWAY, HERE IT IS. MY STORY. I GUESS I'D CALL IT...

MY BLIND DATE

A **SIN CITY** tale of woe


UH... HI, NISHA!
HI, JOSH! WHAT'S UP?
SCHOOL WAS JUST LETTING OUT FOR THE DAY WHEN I FINALLY WORKED UP MY NERVE.
I MADE MY MOVE.
THIS WAS IT.
MY FATE HUNG IN THE BALANCE!


JOSH?
...
MY TONGUE SWELLED UP LIKE IT WAS A BIG, FAT FISH SOMEBODY'D SHOVED INTO MY MOUTH.
MY NUTS FELT LIKE THEY WERE CLIMBING INTO MY STOMACH.

AND I DIDN'T WUSS OUT, DAD. I DID JUST LIKE YOU TOLD ME TO DO. I SUCKED IT UP AND CHARGED AHEAD--AND WENT AND MADE AN ASS OF MYSELF...
YEAH. I'M. UM. FINE. I WAS JUST. Y'KNOW. WONDERING IF MAYBE LIKE IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE. Y'KNOW. ANYTHING TO DO LIKE OVER THE WEEKEND YOU MIGHT WANNA LIKE. I DON'T KNOW. GO SEE A MOVIE OR SOMETHING. JUST AN IDEA.
AW, JOSH ...
... YOU'RE A REALLY NICE GUY..

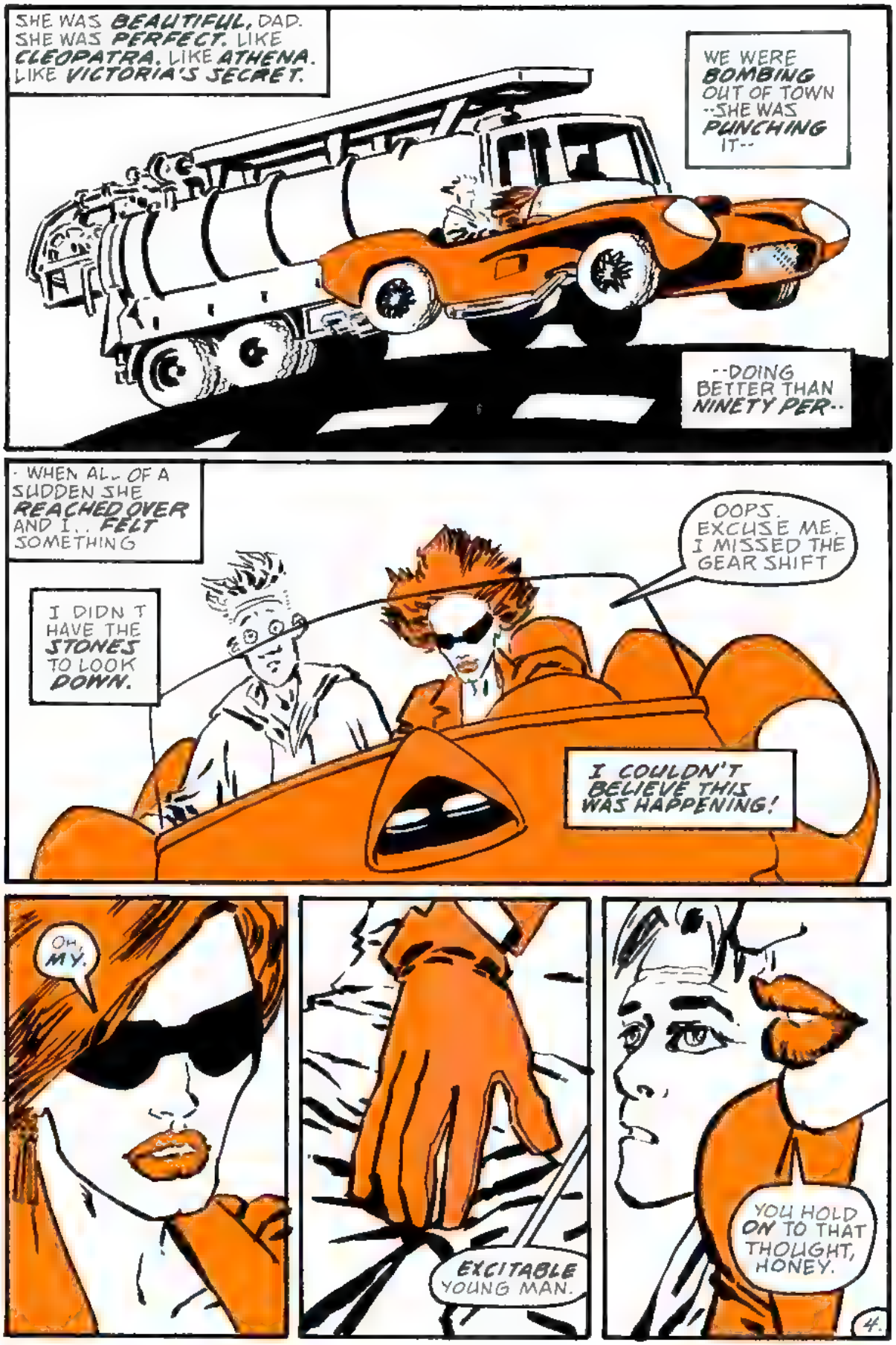
...AND YOU'RE REALLY FUN TO TALK WITH AND EVERYTHING...
THEN CAME THE WORDS THAT EVERY MAN DREADS ...
...BUT CAN'T WE JUST STAY FRIENDS?
SURE. NO SWEAT JUST AN IDEA.

SEE YOU IN CLASS...
SURE. SEE YA.
JUST LIKE THAT, IT WAS OVER.
I NEVER HAD A CHANCE.

BOOM
I FACED MY DESTINY. I KNEW, AT LAST, WHAT I WAS.
MY SOUL SWIRLED DOWN THE PIPE LIKE WATER FROM A TOILET GETTING FLUSHED.

THE WORD STUCK TO ME LIKE WET JOCKEY SHORTS:
LOSER
2.

THEN I HEARD IT
VROOM
WHOA. BITCHIN' FERRARI!
YAA!
SCREECH
HER VOICE WAS HUSKY, LIKE THAT ACTRESS IN THOSE OLD MOVIES YOU WATCH WHEN MOM'S ASLEEP..
CARE FOR A RIDE?
YES, YOU. HOP IN.
9.


SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL, DAD. SHE WAS PERFECT. LIKE CLEOPATRA. LIKE ATHENA. LIKE VICTORIA'S SECRET.
WE WERE BOMBING OUT OF TOWN --SHE WAS PUNCHING IT--
--DOING BETTER THAN NINETY PER--
WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN SHE REACHED OVER AND I.. FELT SOMETHING
I DIDN'T HAVE THE STONES TO LOOK DOWN.
OOPS. EXCUSE ME, I MISSED THE GEAR SHIFT
I COULDN'T BELIEVE THIS WAS HAPPENING!
OH, MY.
EXCITABLE YOUNG MAN.
YOU HOLD ON TO THAT THOUGHT, HONEY.
4

IT WAS LIKE A DREAM. YOU KNOW THE KIND I MEAN.
IT'S NICE HERE, ISN'T IT?
THE WIND WAS COOL, BUT I WAS SWEATING LIKE A COLD CAN OF COKE ON A HOT DAY.
SHE TOOK MY HAND SHE LOOKED EVEN BETTER, STANDING UP
I'M TELLING YOU, DAD WE'RE TALKING VICTORIA'S SECRET.
YEAH IT'S LIKE NICE
I COULD FEEL MY HEARTBEAT IN MY EARS.
I HAD THE BONER OF A LIFE-TIME.
HERE, NOW DON'T BE NERVOUS
I CAN'T HELP BE-ING. Y'KNOW. LIKE. NERVOUS. THIS IS. LIKE. UM. Y'KNOW. MY FIRST TIME.
NO, IT ISN'T.
5

NO, I. LIKE I'M ONLY. LIKE. FIFTEEN. THIS IS. Y'KNOW. THIS'LL BE MY. MY UH FIRST TIME.
NO, HONEY
IT WON'T.
KRUNCH
IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO BREAK YOUR SCRAWNY NECK. JUST A TWIST OF MY WRIST.
BUT ORDERS ARE ORDERS.
AWK
AAK
GAAA!
SNAP
WHY? WHY?
WHO CARES?
IT WAS HORRIBLE!
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO COP A FEEL!
SNAP
THE END

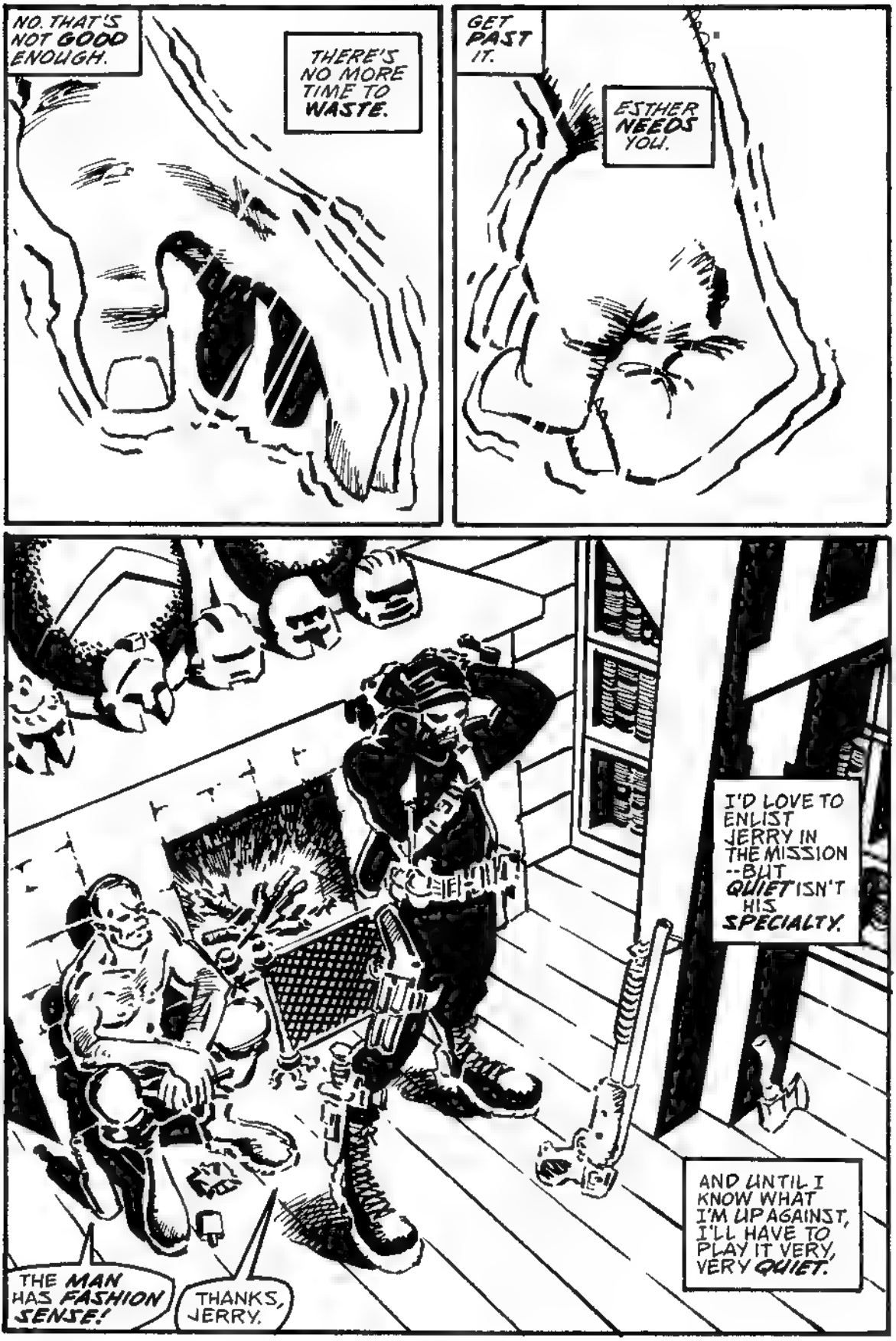
SHE WASN'T KIDDING ABOUT BEING STRONG ENOUGH TO BREAK MY NECK, EITHER.
SHE COULD'VE KILLED ME EASY.
BUT SHE DIDN'T, SON. THAT'S WHAT COUNTS.
THE DOC SAYS THERE'S NOTHING BROKEN IN YOU THAT WON'T HEAL UP JUST FINE.
GET YOUR REST, NOW

AND DON'T BE SO ROUGH ON YOURSELF YOU JUST DID WHAT ANY FELLA YOUR AGE WOULD'VE DONE. IT'S THE TESTOSTERONE, BOY. WE'RE HARD-WIRED, US GUYS ARE.
I GOTTA GET BACK TO WORK. YOUR MOM WILL BE ALONG SOON--AND YOU'RE GONNA TELL HER WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.
AW, DAD...
DON'T ARGUE WITH ME, JOSH. WE GOT NO SECRETS IN THIS FAMILY.
OKAY, DAD.
THAT'S A GOOD BOY.

DON'T LET THIS PUT YOU OFF GIRLS, HEAR?
OH, JESUS OH, JESUS GOLDA'S GONNA BE SICK OVER THIS.
KUK
"NO SECRETS"? PLEASE, DETECTIVE. YOU'RE A MAN OF MANY SECRETS.
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU TO KEEP THEM.
YOU.
IT WAS YOU.

YOU SON OF A BITCH. YOU COST ME FOUR OF MY MEN AND GOT INTERNAL AFFAIRS ALL OVER MY ASS-- AND NOW THIS.
I'LL RIP YOUR DAMN FACE OFF!
COMPOSE YOURSELF COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS YOUR SON IS STILL ALIVE.
THIS WAS ONLY A FRIENDLY WARNING. THE STAKES IN OUR LITTLE GAME HAVE RISEN. WE CAN'T HAVE YOU GOING ALL WOBBLY ON US
I'LL KILL YOU, YOU SON OF A--
HURKK
NICE TIE. A GIFT FROM YOUR WIFE?
SNIP
NEVER FORGET, MY FRIEND--
-WHATEVER PRESSURE YOU'RE FINDING YOURSELF UNDER--
WE ARE EVERYWHERE. WE SEE EVERYTHING.
AND YOU'VE GOT A WIFE AND KIDS TO THINK ABOUT.

MY STOMACH FINALLY SETTLES DOWN.
I'M EVEN ABLE TO EAT THE STEAK AND EGGS THAT JERRY FIXES FOR ME.
I STEAL A FEW MORE PRECIOUS MINUTES TO WASH AWAY THE SWEAT AND GRIME AND BLOOD.
TONK
DAMN IT. STILL SHAKY. HANDS STILL SHAKY.


NO. THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
THERE'S NO MORE TIME TO WASTE.
GET PAST IT.
ESTHER NEEDS YOU.
I'D LOVE TO ENLIST JERRY IN THE MISSION --BUT QUIET ISN'T HIS SPECIALTY.
AND UNTIL I KNOW WHAT I'M UP AGAINST, I'LL HAVE TO PLAY IT VERY, VERY QUIET.
THE MAN HAS FASHION SENSE!
THANKS, JERRY.

ESTHER.
I'M ON MY WAY.
CONTINUED

I love crabby letters. They hardly ever used to let me run the crabby ones in the letters columns back in my old Marvel days, and they sure as hell wouldn't let me get all bitchy in my responses. But that was then . . .

The Fatman
JackSome@aol.com

Well, Frank, you've gone and done it. You've become a tool of the establishment. No, you did not fall into their obvious traps by not growing beyond your boundaries That you have done well—and exceeded to exponential proportions. Yet this has nothing to do with your artwork; it has to do with your willingness to lash out at comics companies while the beast is still doing your thinking, instead of letting your mind do the thinking. You have, in your own small way, contributed to one of the most blatant advertising campaigns in the history of comics, and you have become the tool of DC. Yup, you contributed to their public outlook, and I'm not talking about *Batman*. When DC decided to pull their *Elseworlds 80-Page Giant*, they began their campaign to get their name more visible, and you helped. Look at the major comics headlines for the past few months. The only thing on people's lips for a while there was DC's destruction of these issues and the 2,000 or so copies that now exist in a land across the sea. Instead of bitching about the ever-important issue of creators' rights and the liberties they are being denied because of this issue's destruction, you should have seen that this was DC's step at making a series of books that are way too goddamn expensive (80-page giants for $4.95! Bullshit!), with the title that means, nine times out of ten, a huge pile of dog shit (*Elseworlds*), into the collector's Holy Grail for the next few months, if not years. I know you didn't mean to, but you helped them get their name out there when they needed it the most. I know it's bad publicity, but it's publicity. If some news hound for the "legitimate" news got wind of this and spread it out over the land—about DC's book that showed Superman as a baby in situations babies all over the country were sure to emulate—then, hell, the news would be all over that like fanboys over the Vampirella model. Couldn't you just hear them debating it on one of those stupid argument shows that are basically *Jerry Springer* and *Sally* for the governmental set? It would be an uproar, and at the heart of it DC's bullet would be plastered over every goddamn front page of America. Luckily, that didn't happen, and I hope it never would. However, next time a company decides to pull off a publicity stunt, don't go with your heart and scream "creators' rights"; just sit back and enjoy it as it blows up in their faces. Take it easy

Oh, to be so worldly wise.

"Take it easy"? . . . Nope. I just checked, and I've still got a pulse going.

And one more thing: I never "screamed" "creators' rights" over Kyle Baker's Superbaby job. I simply maintain that DC Comics was *really stupid* to suppress it.

It was never an issue of creators' rights. Hell, we all check our rights at the door when we sign the work-made-for-hire deal. Anybody who bellyaches about that is a dolt. But DC blew it. It was *just plain dumb*, killing Kyle's sweet little job. A wonderful story, gone to waste. And for no good reason.

Jamie Creer
Brisbane, Australia

Let me just say this: There are several things you should never do in a moving vehicle. Never drink, never talk on a mobile phone, never forget to wear a seatbelt. But never *ever* have a girl in lingerie put her head in your lap. Especially not during a high-speed chase! The biting reflex, Frank! The biting reflex! Thank god the hero didn't rear-end or smash into anything! John Wayne Bobbit would have been a mercy compared to what might have happened!

Oh, and by the way, I just purchased a color Marv figure. Sure, the comics store charged me an arm and a leg for the privilege (bastards) It was worth it. And (heaven forbid) I even *took it out of the packet*. He sleeps under my pillow. The head, too.

Sleep well.

By the way, that's Geof Darrow's head that Marv is holding. I don't know if you've heard much about Geof, but . . . well, never mind. Don't give it a thought.

Sleep well. Visions of sugarplums.

Michael Howey
tvddm@netscapeonline.co.uk

I am afraid this is a letter of complaint. It is about the level of violence and nudity in your book and, more importantly, your incessant censorship whining in your letters column. I am not the type of person who gets offended by naked people or strong violence and swearing, but I am offended by your reasons for doing it. Your original *Sin City* story and *That Yellow Bastard* were two of the most enjoyable and even moving reads I have had in the last ten years. They both contained sex, nudity, and violence, and they weren't always important to the plot. That didn't bother me. Now these things feel like they are your way of provoking the censors. I am not against provoking the censors, but somewhere along the line that became more important to you than telling a good story. So far *Hell and Back* has had a typically good plot in the *Sin City* style, but I get the feeling you planned another six-issue series and added three issues of material to provoke the Concerned Mothers of America. Fuck them. Tell the stories you want to tell. None of your readers want a sanitized version to appease these people, but I'm sure most of us don't want an exaggerated version to piss those same people off Get back to your storytelling roots.

I'm not trying to piss off anybody with *Hell and Back*. I'm just defining my hero. Keep in mind: without sin, there is no definition to be had of virtue.

Matt Reinker
axe@viclink.com

Wallace is too good for Sin City. He's noble, for one thing. There aren't too many noble individuals in Sin City. Oh, true, he's an ass-kicker with a grace that can't be matched by anyone, save for Miho. But, sadly, that won't save him.

Yessir, Wallace is going to die. I'm sure of it.

Let's face it, the only one who has survived any of the *Sin City* story lines is Dwight. But as for the others—Marv and Hartigan—both dead. I don't expect Wallace to be any different.

And I think Esther's going to do it.

She's being trained by the Colonel to be an assassin,

whether she wants to or not, much like the lady in blue. And what did the lady in blue do to "graduate" from the Colonel's "academy"? Why, she killed someone she loved.

And, right now, Wallace seems to fit that bill.

It's too bad, really. I like Wallace. He's my kind of guy.

Olav Beemer
Zeist, The Netherlands

Strange. Although I've noticed before how much your work takes advantage of an almost cinematographic way of storytelling—not only in terms of story, but also in terms of artwork—its merits never were demonstrated quite as powerfully as in *Sin City: Hell and Back #5*. At times, it really was almost like watching a movie. The only thing missing was the nerve-racking soundtrack—and possibly the sound of bullets flying and tires screeching.

That having been said, it's quite unfortunate that the current *Sin City* miniseries isn't really reaching the level of quality thus far that I've grown used to. At first, it simply appeared that the tale was off to a slow start, but now that it has five whole issues under its belt, the story line still remains somewhat bland, linear, and simplistic. Sure, it has that distinctive *Sin City* feel and atmosphere, but it seems there's simply not enough story to go around this time, and, as a result, it has to be stretched out over nine issues, which doesn't improve its readability, to be honest.

Fortunately, things do look to be shifting and moving in the right direction right now, especially after seeing that final page of the issue at hand. I assume I wouldn't be too far from the truth if I presumed that the remaining four issues will present a more focused story line, now that our main character, Wallace, finally knows what he wants and where he can get it. Therefore, despite the minor points of criticism I have made above, I actually am eagerly looking forward to the upcoming four issues, and already anticipating, with much mouth-watering interest, the miniseries' climax.

Oh, and by the by, do keep up the *Sin City* gallery. It always makes my day to see so wide a variety of talented artists have a go at some *Sin City*-style pinups! Thumbs up on that one.

A.R. Yngve
Oslo, Norway

As a longtime reader and admirer of your work, I have finally begun to feel a wee bit critical of your most recent efforts.

Try this for an experiment: Pick up random pages from your previous work, and sort them chronologically; count the number of panels per page; then appraise the amount of black space on each page; then look at the event-to-panel ratio. Can you see the trend? Bigger and bigger panels, blacker and blacker; less and less plot spread over more and more pages. It's an onslaught of empty black spaces. Page after page of ever-increasing empty black spaces.

Why?

I know, I know . . . it's the Japanese influences, Hemingway's iceberg prose, etc. Only, Japanese art uses empty *white* spaces, and Hemingway used only words, not pictures, which imposed more artistic discipline on him. Frankly I'm getting a little weary with all the black emptiness, the loose layout, and thinning-out of plot.

It was so refreshing when you tried something new and daring, with the historical epic *300*. Why not surprise us again—break out of the *Sin City* format?

The risk inherent in the last *Sin City* story is that the layout eventually grows so loose, so spare, that it dissolves entirely. Or it could be that the plot itself, the flow of events in the story, is getting dangerously diluted by all the empty spaces on the page.

Beware of self-indulgence, the successful artist's nemesis. Imagine, if you can, full pages that are completely black with only a few white dots scattered across . . . and the occasional speech balloon. Or a "comic" consisting of nothing but full-spread pinups of babes, guns, and cars—that's the future of *Sin City* I fear. Please don't go that way.

Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, CA

As a M.O.E. (Multiverse Observer and Explorer), I enjoy leaving the reality of superheroes and entering a dark and forbidding reality like the one found in Frank Miller's *Hell and Back #5* . The heavy-laced drama of a young woman who is willing to give herself openly and winds up dead, riddled with bullets; Wallace, who must deal with a nymphomaniac who wears only blue during a time of crisis—as he tries to keep her away from the window, she has other things on her mind; this story is a dark fantasy of a strange world that has thrown the rule book out of the window.

I found it an interesting hypothesis that snipers are a cowardly lot, as they fire from a long distance. Perhaps they should look at their potential victim's eyes. Maybe then they would hesitate in pulling that trigger. Rugged and brutish brutality is depicted, as the sniper is horribly shot in the eye, with a whitish specter of splashed blood upon the wall. Excitement builds as Wallace and his blue lady jump into the vehicle—and their dash for freedom from a Mercedes that has the ability to catch them.

The logic falls into focus, as it is wise not to shoot the driver, but to kill the car—simple logic that the Army has used all along. I used to teach kill zones on tanks and fighter jets. Kill the machine, dammit!

I also agree with Frank on the Comics Code. Who needs it? We would lose great books like this one!

Mike Hendricks
Kingsville, TX

I never would've believed it, but the action sequence of *Hell and Back #4* even surpassed the one in issue #3. Wallace is unstoppable! I laughed my ass off at Manute going through that window.

I had a whole slew of adolescent jokes regarding the "Blue Eyes" connection (most involving the phrase "blue balls"), but my urge to sound high-minded repressed them.

On the other hand, I was going to analyze every aspect of your covers, but my chief reaction became pared down to a Neanderthal-like grunt and moan.

Is it just me, or does drawing for the *Sin City* gallery bring out the best in artists? Gil Kane's doesn't necessarily look like a *Sin City* universe, but those are definitely *Sin City* characters. And Brian Bolland's—my God—not even when Dwight was shot in the face and his eye was nearly hanging out did he look so mess-with-me-and-you-die terrifying.

What else, what else? The column! I don't know the details of Kyle Baker's recent treatment by DC Comics, but you know what? I don't need to. I trust you, Frank. If you say his brilliant story was shafted by a company that doesn't exactly have a sterling track record of devotion to its artists, I believe you.

We, the readers, need to know things like this, Frank. We need to be reminded of this. Comics are our haven. There have been times in my life when my comics were the only things keeping me going. Luckily those dark days are long past. But it burns me up to know many of the people in charge of my refuge make it weaker every day by sticking to ridiculous, useless, destructive traditions. And it makes me proud to keep supporting the few that don't. Like you. Keep up the damn fine work.

NEXT ISSUE: Who *doesn't* die?

—FM

GALLERY

matt **WAGNER**

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She don't look much in dis drees to me --
--but dat sure ain't no sin!
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